

Role Play Techniques

- Doubling
- Mirror
- Role reversal
- Soliloquy
- Surplus reality
- Observing ego
- De-roling
- Body double
- Containing Double
- Cognitive double

About the double technique of psychodrama

Doubling is a key role play technique in psychodrama.

Sometimes referred to as the "inner voice," doubling allows the client – called the protagonist in psychodrama – to experience his, her or their inner self in the here-and-now moment, rather than simply talking about one's inner thoughts and feelings.

Learning to accurately label feelings and speak the truth about one's feelings and needs advances growth, recovery and change. Psychodrama provides embodied role training for speaking up and speaking truth – and that is especially true when using the doubling technique.

In psychodrama, the classic double assists with identifying:

- Feelings
- Inner experiences
- Thoughts and belief systems
- Patterns

In addition, it helps the client give voice to:

- His, her or their truth in a safe place.
- Experiment with new ways of speaking.

Growth, recovery and change involve moving from denial to reality, alienation to connection, and passivity to personal power. People can learn new roles in action to replace the roles the symptoms they have been holding. When we explore the roles in greater depth, we quickly realize that roles arise from layers of behaviors and experiences, beginning from our very birth.

The technique of doubling creates a "felt" connection with another. As the child grows older,



the parent's mirroring allows the toddler to learn how to observe, literally establishing skills to see the whole picture. The three main role play techniques assist with the developmental stages as identified by Erik Erikson in his classic 1956 book, "Identity and the Life Cycle,"

- The first phase involves the psychodramatic technique of doubling, along with soothing sound, gentle touch, higher frequency sounds and soft eye contact, and placing no demands on the infant.
- The second phase is the psychodramatic technique of mirroring, which is seen as a higher engagement because we are seen and acknowledged by another who gives us feedback about our behavior and teaches us social cues in the world. Mirroring offers recognition of the person's external world, giving appropriate neural feedback and facilitating the ability to regulate affect.
- Finally, there is the psychodramatic technique of role reversal, which involves a high level of social engagement – the ability to step out of the self and being able to reflect how another might feel or behave. Role reversal is not possible unless there has been adequate toning of the vagus through empathic attunement and social engagement.

Uses:

Tell one's truth.

Voice inner thoughts, experiences and feelings

Receive support and validation from "self"

Practice a new way of speaking and thinking

Identify long-standing patterns.

Find clarification for self

How to double

Be alert to a place in the session (group, couple or individual) where doubling may be helpful. Typically it may be a place where the person is:

- Quiet
- Having difficulty finding words to describe his, her or their experience.
- Having difficulty identifying a feeling or a range of feelings.
- Client-person speaking, but you have the clinical sense that some material being withheld.
- Needing support and validation.
- Needing clarification of thoughts and feelings.
- Needing motivation or coaching to express hidden thoughts and feelings.

Explain that this is a time where you would like to use the "inner voice" as helpful to the person.

Ask permission to step into this role:

"I would like to play your inner voice – is that OK with you? To do this, I'd like to sit or stand next to you and say what your inner self might be thinking or experiencing. If I say anything that is not true for you, just correct it by saying what IS true for you."

Stand or sit next to the person, just slightly behind (5 or 10 inches). Make sure that the distance is comfortable and safe for the person and adjust if necessary.

Adjust your body to mirror the person's body language (legs crossed, arms or hands held or moving in a certain way, gaze focused in a particular direction, etc.)

Speak in the person's voice, expand on what he,



she or they is saying or what you clinically believe is hidden:

Person: "I'm not sure what I'm feeling right now."

Therapist as double: "I'm not completely sure what I'm feeling right now, although part of me is feeling sad."

If the person denies what the double has said, therapist as double will allow the words to be changed. Therapist as double is not telling the person WHAT to say or think, simply offering possibilities to practice verbalizing.

Caution! If you are working with a traumatized person and he, she or they appears to be dissociating and/or is showing a high level of distress, do NOT use the expanding double. In this case, you will want to use the Containing Double, a separate psychodramatic intervention developed by the Therapeutic Spiral Model, an adapted version of psychodrama for survivors of trauma.

When you are using the double technique, remember that you are, at the core, still in the role of the therapist. Adam Blatner, who has written several books on the psychodramatic method, says the dual function places significant demands on the therapist in knowing when to push and recede, in keeping a sense of objectivity and timing, and in being aware of the difference between the therapist's personal issues and the person the therapist is working with.